

## European Blue Card

The EU Blue Card is a special residence permit issued by the *Questore* (Police Commissioner at Provincial level) to highly qualified foreign workers, provided that they have a job contract or a binding job offer and are the holders of a residence permit for work reasons.

The Blue Card has a two-year validity on condition that the foreigner has an indefinite duration contract of employment.

In case of short-term contracts, the right of residence will expire within three months after the end of the employment contract.

The employment relationship is the legal link between employers and employees. It exists when a person performs work or services under certain conditions in return for remuneration.

A qualifying criterion to obtain the Blue Card is the existence of an employment relationship, that is, performing paid work for or under the direction or coordination of another natural or legal person. Furthermore, the applicant must have successfully completed a higher education qualification programme of at least three years or, in case of regulated professions, must possess specific professional qualifications giving access to such professional activities by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.

The employer, after having identified the foreigner to be recruited, has the duty to submit an application for authorization to work to the *Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione* (One-Stop Shop for Immigration) of the *Prefettura* in the province of residence or where the company has its registered office or where the work will be carried out. Where the law conditions are met, they will issue the authorization allowing the applicant to obtain an entry visa for Italy.

The authorization can be replaced by a statement by the employer, provided that the latter has signed a specific agreement with the Ministry of the Interior.

The foreigner does not need an entry visa if he/she is legally staying in the country or is the holder of an EU Blue Card issued by another Member State where he has resided legally for at least 18 months. In the latter case, the employer must submit the application for work authorization within one month of the date the foreigner entered the national territory.

The EU Blue Card holder can be granted a long-term resident status (and be issued with an **EC residence permit for long-term residents**) if the following two conditions are met:

- five years of legal and continuous residence within the territory of the European Union as an EU Blue Card holder;
- legal and continuous residence for at least two years in Italy as holder of an Italian electronic residence permit labelled as EU Blue Card.

Family members of an EU Blue Card holder, who has a long-term resident status, are issued with a two-year residence permit for family reasons. Family members, in fact, obtain an EC long-term resident permit on proving they fulfil the necessary requirements and have resided legally and continuously for a period of five years - of which the last two in Italy - within the territory of an EU country.